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Human resources management

Activities of the Ethics Office

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/254 on the review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually on the activities of the Ethics Office and the implementation of ethics policies. The report additionally includes information on the activities of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations, as requested by the Assembly in its resolution 63/250 on human resources management.

The present report covers the period from 1 August 2014 to 31 July 2015.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report, the tenth since the establishment of the Ethics Office in January 2006, is submitted pursuant to subparagraph 16 (i) of General Assembly resolution 60/254, in which the Assembly requested annual reporting on the activities of the Office and the implementation of ethics policies.

2. Considering the mandate of the Ethics Office to promote the highest standards of integrity and to foster an organizational culture of respect, transparency and accountability, the present report provides an overview and assessment of the activities of the Office from 1 August 2014 to 31 July 2015.

3. Based in New York, the Ethics Office provides advisory support on ethics and other services to the global staff population of the Secretariat. Pursuant to that responsibility, the Office continued its efforts to engage with as many staff as possible across the Organization during the reporting period. In addition to conducting outreach missions to multiple duty stations, the Office, inter alia, launched a new and mandatory online training course on ethics awareness, designed and initiated the 2014 leadership dialogue programme across the Secretariat, and revised and distributed ethics guidance and resource materials.

4. The present report further details developments in the administration by the Ethics Office of the Organization's financial disclosure programme and protection against retaliation policy. Efforts continue to be undertaken to strengthen both areas of service.

5. The report includes information on the activities of the Ethics Panel of the United Nations, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 63/250.

II. Background and general information

6. The Ethics Office was established by the Secretary-General as an independent Secretariat entity subsequent to the approval of the General Assembly at the 2005 World Summit (see Assembly resolution 60/1, para. 161 (d)). Having commenced operations on 3 January 2006, and in accordance with Secretary-General's bulletins ST/SGB/2005/22 and ST/SGB/2007/11, the functions of the Office include:

(a) Providing confidential advice and guidance to staff on ethical issues, including administering an ethics helpline;

(b) Administering the Organization's financial disclosure programme;

(c) Administering the Organization's protection against retaliation policy;

(d) Developing standards, training and education on issues relating to ethics, in coordination with the Office of Human Resources Management and other offices, and conducting outreach on ethics;

(e) Supporting standard-setting for ethics and promoting policy coherence within the Secretariat and among the Organization's funds and programmes.

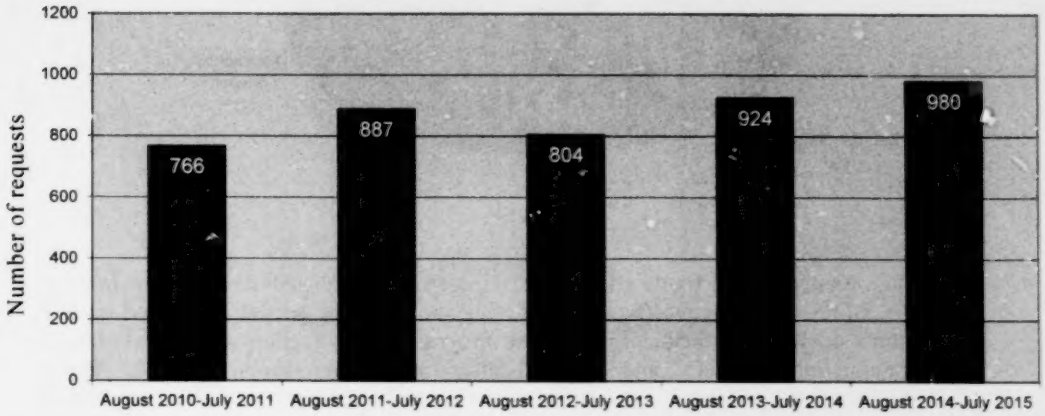
7. Pursuant to its core responsibilities, the Ethics Office assists the Secretary-General in ensuring that staff members perform their functions consistent with the highest standards of integrity required by the Charter of the United Nations. The Office serves the global Secretariat, including duty stations in New York, Geneva,

Vienna and Nairobi, all regional commissions, peacekeeping operations, special political missions and other designated offices.

8. During the reporting period, the Ethics Office received 980 requests for its services, representing the highest number of requests received by the Office over a reporting cycle in the history of its operations (see figure I).

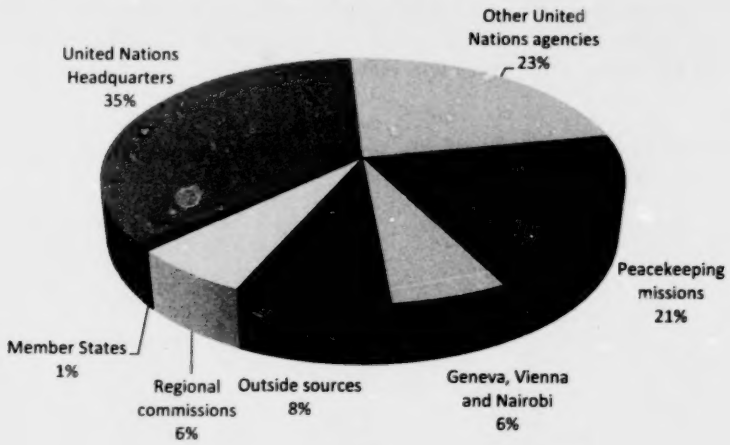
Figure I

Overall requests for Ethics Office services by reporting cycle, August 2010-July 2015



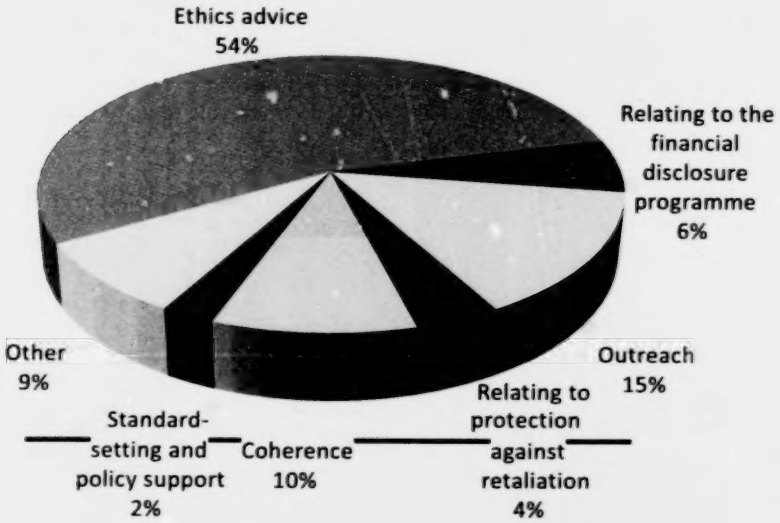
9. Although established in New York, the Ethics Office continues to receive a significant percentage of requests for its services from locations and entities away from Headquarters (see figure II). In its commitment to providing high-quality and confidential ethics advice to all staff, regardless of location, the Office engages in regular and sustained outreach activities. Since 2011, the Office has conducted more than 50 outreach visits to United Nations offices and entities away from New York. Such efforts to enhance global awareness of its services have seen an increase in the number of requests from 412 in the 2009/10 reporting cycle to an annual average of 872 requests over the past five years.

Figure II
Service requests by source, 1 August 2014-31 July 2015



10. As depicted in figure III, and reflecting the comprehensive service coverage of the Ethics Office, requests received during the reporting period concerned general ethics advice, the financial disclosure programme, protection against retaliation, training and outreach, and standard-setting and policy support. Ethics advice, including that relating to the financial disclosure programme, continued to account for the majority of requests for services received (60 per cent in the current cycle).

Figure III
Service requests by category, 1 August 2014-31 July 2015



III. Activities of the Ethics Office

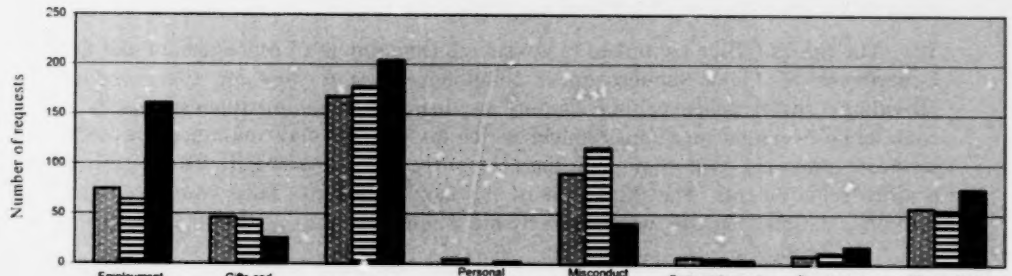
A. Advice and guidance

11. In its provision of confidential and impartial ethics advice, the Ethics Office plays an essential role in promoting and upholding the ethical standards of the Organization. In providing advice and guidance on the ethical obligations of international civil servants as contained in the Charter and applicable rules and regulations, the Office enables staff to make better decisions that advance the values, principles and interests of the United Nations.

12. In order to mitigate operational and reputational risks to the Organization, the Ethics Office further provides advice to staff and managers on preventing, managing and resolving actual or potential conflicts of interest. In providing such a function, the Office supports the integrity and credibility of the Organization.

13. Considering the essential role of the Ethics Office as an independent office neither representing staff nor management, United Nations personnel at all levels frequently contact the Office to obtain impartial and confidential advice and guidance. During the reporting cycle, the Office received 533 requests for advice, an increase of 12 per cent over the previous cycle. Figure IV provides a breakdown of the categories and number of requests for advice received over the past three reporting periods.

Figure IV
Requests for ethics advice by cycle, August 2012-July 2015



	Employment-related concerns	Gifts and hospitality	Outside activities	Personal investments and assets	Misconduct reporting procedures	Post-employment restrictions	Procurement ethics	Other conflict of interest
August 2012-July 2013	75	47	168	5	91	7	9	57
August 2013-July 2014	64	44	178	0	117	6	12	55
August 2014-July 2015	161	26	204	3	41	4	18	76

14. The highest number of requests for advice received during the reporting period concerned outside activities. The consistently high number of such requests reflects significant staff awareness of the need to consult on proposed external activities in the light of their obligations to the Organization. The Ethics Office provides advice and guidance on the appropriateness of outside activities being considered and on approval procedures. By providing advice that deters staff involvement in external activities incompatible with their status as international civil servants, the Office protects the reputation of the Organization.

15. The current reporting period saw a decrease in the number of inquiries recorded under the category of misconduct reporting procedures. The decrease is a result of the redefinition of the category by the Ethics Office, so that it now only captures those cases in which a staff member wishes to file a formal report of misconduct and seeks advice on the appropriate reporting mechanism. In previous cycles, the category captured all cases of general staff grievances. Many of those matters, such as inquiries concerning workplace disputes with supervisors, are now more appropriately categorized as employment-related concerns.

16. The Ethics Office continued to provide independent advice to the Procurement Division of the Department of Management on issues relating to the ethics, anti-corruption and corporate compliance programmes of vendors seeking to do business with the Organization. Such advice addressed the suitability of external ethics and compliance experts retained by vendors to verify that the vendor implemented business ethics, anti-corruption and compliance programmes adhering to the expectations of the United Nations; and whether the vendor's integrity initiatives provided sufficient assurance that the vendor met United Nations requirements.

17. In the course of the reporting period, the Ethics Office responded to queries from the Procurement Division regarding 18 vendors at various stages of the reinstatement process. Advice for each reinstatement matter required multiple reviews and consultations with the relevant departments. The Office continued to work closely with the Procurement Division to provide advice on third-party due diligence, reputational risk, potential organizational and personal conflicts of interest and best practices in anti-corruption programmes. In addition to making revisions to the expectations of the United Nations concerning ethics and compliance that vendors must satisfy to obtain reinstatement, the Office provided advice regarding corporate compliance programme requirements to be included in requests for proposals for larger procurements.

18. The Ethics Office continued to advise the Department of Management and the Department of Field Support on a compliance monitorship for two vendors providing critical peacekeeping support services. The monitorship establishes a contractual oversight mechanism under which the vendors may continue to provide services, provided that they and their employees comply strictly with United Nations requirements. The third year of the monitorship has been completed and recommendations made to the vendors by the monitors continue to be implemented.

19. In supporting the United Nations system, the Ethics Office responded to multiple ethics advice, policy and information requests from United Nations entities and their secretariats, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations University, the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute.

B. Financial disclosure programme

20. The aim of the Organization's financial disclosure programme, as administered by the Ethics Office, is to protect the integrity and reputation of the Organization by identifying, managing and mitigating the risk of personal conflicts of interest.

Designated staff members, including all staff at the D-1 level and above and those whose principal duties involve procurement and investment, are required to file annual disclosure statements. The review of statements is conducted by an independent external party.

21. During the 2014 annual filing cycle, beginning on 1 March 2014 and covering the disclosure reporting period from 1 January to 31 December 2013, a total of 5,043 filers participated in the programme, including 1,092 for the first time (21.6 per cent). As at the close of the 2014 cycle, the programme had achieved a 100 per cent compliance rate, the first time in the history of the programme that full compliance had been attained. This compliance level is additionally commendable considering that several new field missions had been established in crisis locations during the middle of the filing cycle.

22. The Ethics Office provided substantive and technical support to participating staff throughout the 2014 filing cycle to facilitate compliance. The Office responded to individual queries within 48 hours and followed up with participants until their issues were fully resolved. It provided prompt advice to staff members requiring detailed guidance regarding their specific situations and helped to clarify applicable policies and staff regulations.

23. During the cycle, the Ethics Office communicated with filers primarily by e-mail and telephone. The programme handled approximately 38,000 e-mails, of which 21,000 were addressed by the Office and 17,000 by the external reviewer.

24. The Ethics Office further enhanced its use of information technology to better assist filers in meeting their compliance requirements. For the first time, the Office used online conferencing services such as WebEx to provide real-time system navigation assistance to new staff members not conversant with the programme's online filing platform. Such services have proved to be very effective and has received positive feedback from filers.

25. In the course of the 2014 cycle, the Ethics Office notified departmental focal points and heads of department regularly regarding their respective department's compliance level. This measure assisted departments in ensuring internal follow-up with staff who had failed to submit their disclosure statements or supporting documentation on time. Such follow-up was essential to ensuring that gaps in compliance were detected and remedied in a timely manner.

26. The verification of filer information to ensure accuracy and completeness is an integral part of the financial disclosure programme. During the 2014 filing cycle, 239 filers were selected for verification through stratified random sampling.

27. During the 2014 filing cycle, the external reviewer identified 177 filers (3.5 per cent of the filer population) as having a total of 193 items or activities that required review for conflicts of interest. Of those, 58 related to financial holdings, 53 to outside activities, 78 to family relationships and 4 to other categories. The external reviewer, in consultation with the Ethics Office, issued individual recommendations directed at mitigating and managing all actual and potential conflicts of interest.

28. In its resolution 63/250, the General Assembly endorsed a recommendation by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that the Secretary-General provide data, by duty station, on: (a) the number of individuals

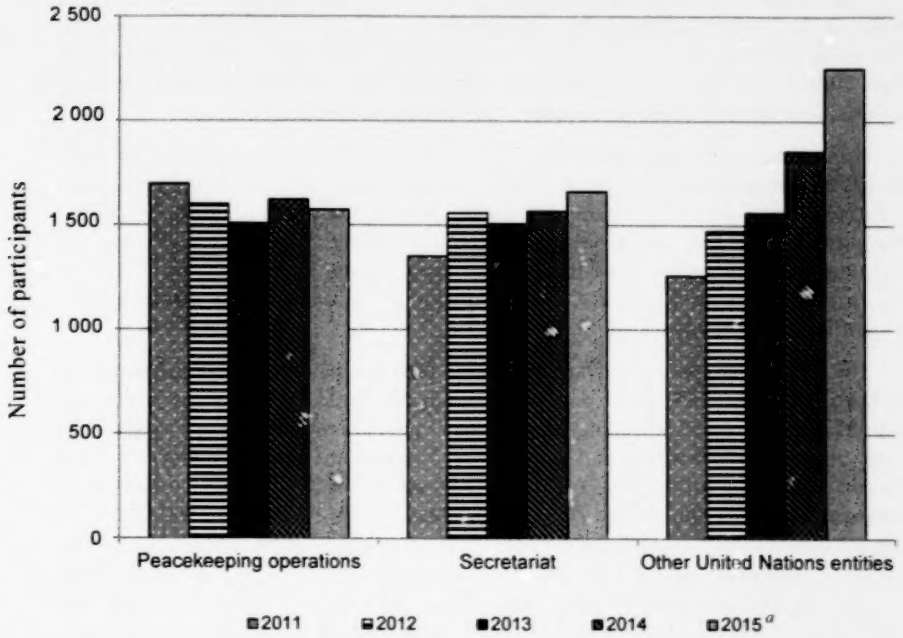
covered by the programme; (b) the number of individuals having complied with their filing obligations; (c) the number of individuals having failed to comply with those obligations; and (d) the reasons for their failure to comply. Information concerning the 2014 financial disclosure programme by department or office is contained in the annex to the present report.

29. In 2007, the Secretary-General initiated the voluntary public disclosure initiative, an annual exercise open to senior officials at the Assistant Secretary-General level and above who have fulfilled their confidential financial disclosure obligations under the financial disclosure programme. Signed voluntary disclosure forms are posted on the webpage of the Secretary-General on the United Nations website. Only those senior officials whose confidential financial disclosure forms are completed and closed are eligible to participate. The initiative is a key element of the Secretary-General's commitment to transparency and accountability. By making voluntary public disclosures, senior officials provide assurances to the public and Member States that the discharge of their official functions is not influenced by personal interests.

30. A total of 151 senior officials were eligible to participate in the 2014 voluntary public disclosure exercise, 103 of whom opted to publicly disclose a summary of their assets, liabilities and outside interests. Senior officials who opted to maintain the confidentiality of their financial disclosure information cited, inter alia, security concerns and cultural, religious and other reasons. The 2014 participation rate remained consistent with that of previous years, demonstrating an ongoing commitment to the initiative.

31. The 2015 financial disclosure programme filing cycle was successfully launched on 1 March 2015. As at 31 July 2015, a total of 5,488 staff members were enrolled in the programme. Figure V provides a comparison of annual participation levels by organizational grouping. The accompanying table depicts the numerical breakdown. As shown, the number of filers has continued to increase, although at a slower rate than in the early years of the programme. Compared with a population of 1,704 filers in 2006, the current filer population of 5,488 represents an increase of 222 per cent. Although filers from the Secretariat and peacekeeping operations continue to constitute the majority of the total filer population, the number of filers from other entities of the United Nations system that participate in the financial disclosure programme on a cost-sharing basis has increased considerably from 339 in 2006 to 2,253 in 2015.

Figure V
Financial disclosure participation by entity and filing year, 2011-2015



[a] As at 31 July 2015.

Financial disclosure participation by entity and filing year, 2011-2015

Filing year	*Peacekeeping operations*	*Secretariat*	*Other United Nations entities*	*Total by year*
2011	1 697	1 351	1 258	4 306
2012	1 600	1 558	1 472	4 630
2013	1 508	1 505	1 560	4 573
2014	1 622	1 566	1 855	5 043
2015[a]	1 574	1 661	2 253	5 488

[a] As at 31 July 2015.

32. The increase in the filer population is indicative of the continuing awareness among programme managers, who are responsible for selecting programme participants, of the need to identify and manage the risk of conflicts of interest.

33. In addition to serving the Secretariat, the Ethics Office administers the financial disclosure programme for other entities of the United Nations system that

participate on a cost-sharing basis.[1] These include entities with smaller filing populations or that outsource the financial disclosure service to the Secretariat.

34. The financial disclosure services provided by the Ethics Office to other entities of the United Nations system ensure that measures to enhance awareness of conflicts of interest among staff and to mitigate the risk are applied consistently across United Nations entities. The arrangement is also cost-effective by reducing, inter alia, unit costs because of the larger participating filer population.

35. During the reporting period, the Ethics Office additionally provided technical and substantive guidance to other United Nations entities that are in the process of instituting their own financial disclosure programmes. Such assistance has contributed to effective capacity-building and the coherent application of financial disclosure standards and methodology, while recognizing the expectation of United Nations entities with a significant filer population to manage their own programmes and conflict of interest risks.

36. The review of the financial disclosure programme's regulatory framework continued during the 2014/15 reporting cycle. In 2014, the Ethics Office completed an initial internal review focusing on the existing regulatory framework in the light of the programme's history and experiences gained to date in addressing and mitigating conflicts of interest. A working group of the Secretariat composed of representatives from the Office of Human Resources Management, the Office of Central Support Services and the Ethics Office was established in 2015 to further review the regulatory framework and the recommendations of the internal study. The working group, with advisory input from the Office of Legal Affairs, has identified areas where modifications would be beneficial and continues to deliberate on aspects of the programme. The group's work included discussions on how to sharpen the programme's focus on conflict of interest risks; how to strengthen staff awareness; and what changes could add value to the programme, based on the experiences of other United Nations entities or involving national policies regarding conflict of interest management and asset declaration systems.

C. Protection of staff against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations

37. The Ethics Office administers the policy on protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations (see Secretary General's bulletin ST/SGB/2005/21). Recognizing the importance of whistle-blower protection in promoting the reporting of fraud, corruption and other serious forms of misconduct, the Secretariat developed the

[1] The following entities of the United Nations system currently participate in the programme: the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute; the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa; the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; the United Nations Compensation Commission; the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the United Nations Institute for Training and Research; the United Nations University; the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; and the International Criminal Court.

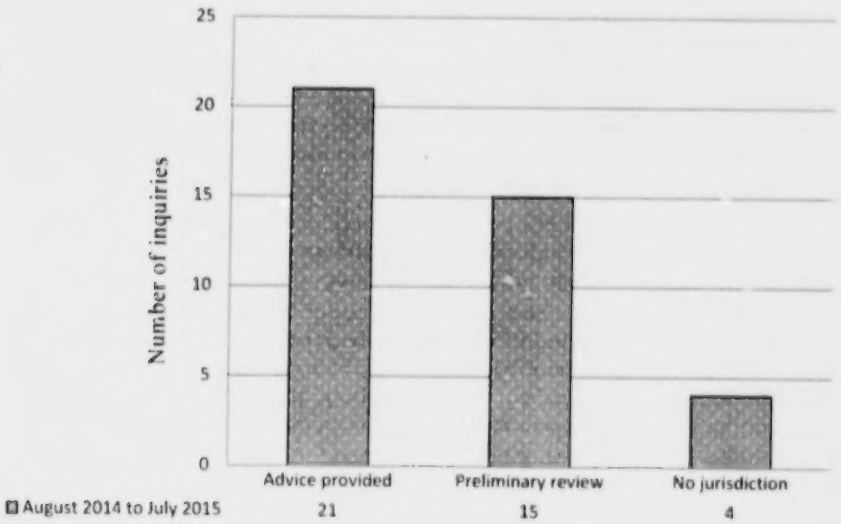
policy as an essential internal accountability mechanism following the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

38. In accordance with the protection against retaliation policy, the Ethics Office receives complaints of retaliation and conducts preliminary reviews to determine whether a complainant has engaged in a protected activity and, if so, whether the protected activity was a contributing factor in causing the alleged retaliation. If the Office determines that a prima facie case of retaliation has been established, the matter is referred to the Office of Internal Oversight Services for investigation. The Ethics Office makes a final retaliation determination subsequent to its review of the investigation report and supporting evidence.

39. During the reporting period, the Ethics Office received 40 inquiries concerning the protection against retaliation policy (see figure VI), of which 4 were determined to fall outside the mandate of the Office and 21 involved, inter alia, requests for policy advice and information. Staff members raising workplace concerns not covered by the policy were advised of other available resources and referred to the appropriate offices, including the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, the Management Evaluation Unit, the Office of Staff Legal Assistance and the Office of Human Resources Management. The 21 advice cases did not constitute allegations of retaliation pursuant to the protection against retaliation policy.

40. Concerning the inquiries where staff alleged retaliation in accordance with Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2005/21, the Ethics Office initiated 15 preliminary reviews. Of those, one staff member abandoned the protection against retaliation request, one case was resolved informally to the satisfaction of the complainant and the Office determined that seven of the reviews did not raise prima facie cases of retaliation. The majority of those cases concerned workplace disputes between the complainants and their colleagues or supervisor, wherein it was determined that the complainant had not engaged in an activity protected by the policy. Six cases remain under preliminary review.

Figure VI
Actions taken on protection against retaliation policy inquiries, 1 August 2014-31 July 2015



41. During the reporting period, the Ethics Office further determined one prima facie case of retaliation for a protection request review initiated in 2013/14. With the advice provided by the Office and the consent of the complainant, however, the matter was resolved satisfactorily.

42. As previously reported, in 2012/13 the Secretariat initiated an external expert review of its protection against retaliation policy. Completed in the 2013/14 reporting cycle, the expert review issued recommendations to achieve a more effective and robust policy. In accordance with emerging global best practices, and noting that the current policy was being utilized by staff as a grievance mechanism for work performance disputes, the review recommended that the policy be refocused on protecting whistle-blowers who reported allegations or cooperated with investigations of wrongdoing that posed substantial harm to the interests, operations or governance of the Organization. It specifically noted the developing trend in relevant national legislation to reserve protection for disclosures of wrongdoing made in the public interest rather than personal interest, and further recommended expansion of the protection against retaliation policy to provide for retaliation prevention.

43. Upon the completion of the expert review, the Ethics Office, in collaboration with the Department of Management, the Office of Legal Affairs and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, prepared a proposal on a revised protection against retaliation policy. Following its review by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the revised policy proposal was presented at the April 2015 meeting of the Staff-Management Committee, held in Bonn, Germany. An ad hoc working group was subsequently established by the Staff-Management Committee to further consider the revised policy proposal. Composed of staff and management representatives, the working group held its first meeting in June 2015. It will

present its recommendations regarding the revised policy to the Staff-Management Committee upon the conclusion of its deliberations.

D. Outreach, training and education

44. Throughout 2014/15, the Ethics Office maintained its commitment to reach staff across the Organization. Engagement in staff outreach and awareness-raising is essential to identifying and addressing ethics-related concerns across the United Nations and to strengthening a consistent and shared ethical culture.

45. Pursuant to that goal, the Ethics Office conducted outreach missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe, Uganda, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara and the Kuwait Joint Support Office.

46. During the missions, the Ethics Office engaged with more than 1,000 individuals. It held town hall meetings, provided confidential ethics consultations with individual staff members and conducted tailored ethics briefings and presentations for specific field offices.

47. As recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/247, the Ethics Office conducted mandatory ethics induction briefings for senior leaders to have a positive impact on the Organization's culture of ethics, integrity and accountability. The Director of the Office personally conducted 13 confidential ethics induction briefings with newly appointed Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General, including Special Representatives and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. The briefings addressed personal ethical responsibility, setting the "tone from the top", retaliation prevention and transparency and accountability practices.

48. In furtherance of promoting the Organization's ethical standards and values, the Ethics Office additionally provided 13 ethics briefings for incoming members of various panels of experts. Coordinated with the Department of Political Affairs, the briefings enhanced awareness of the ethical expectations of the United Nations on the part of contracted experts conducting essential work for the Organization.

49. In 2014/15, the Ethics Office, in cooperation with the Office of Human Resources Management, launched a new online ethics training course entitled "Ethics and integrity at the United Nations". The new course, which replaces the Organization's previous online ethics training entitled "Integrity awareness initiative" and its half-day training workshop entitled "Professional ethics and integrity in our daily work", is available on Inspira in English and French; and is mandatory for all staff members.

50. In accordance with the mandate of the Ethics Office to strengthen an ethical culture throughout the Organization, the purpose of "Ethics and integrity at the United Nations" is to promote ethical awareness and decision-making on the part of staff so that they are better enabled to fulfil the mission of the Organization. The

new online training course addresses typical ethical issues faced by staff and is designed to promote a common understanding of best ethical practices and standards of integrity. While the course introduces new staff to the ethical expectations of the Organization, it further serves as an invaluable refresher opportunity for existing staff who have previously received ethics training. As at 31 July 2015, the course had been completed by more than 11,000 staff members.

51. In recognition of the importance of ethics training for all United Nations personnel, "Ethics and integrity at the United Nations" has additionally been made available to other categories of Secretariat personnel, such as consultants and those on temporary appointments, on the UNKampus Portals webpage of the United Nations System Staff College (http://portals.unssc.org/). The webpage may also be accessed by the staff of other entities of the United Nations system and the general public.

52. The course is also being utilized as a model ethics programme by other United Nations entities updating or developing their own online ethics training courses.

53. During the reporting period, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the Ethics Office launched the 2014 leadership dialogue on treating one another with respect and tolerance. The leadership dialogue programme provides an annual opportunity to staff and managers at Headquarters and in field locations to engage in a one hour discussion on ethics and integrity issues. With a focus on the importance of practising respect and tolerance in the workplace, the topic in 2014 was selected in response to strong interest by staff in the topics of good management and workplace fairness. The 2014 programme cycle ended on 31 December of that year.

54. Subsequent to the successful completion of the 2014 programme, the Ethics Office developed the 2015 leadership dialogue, entitled "Fulfilling our mission: taking individual responsibility". The 2015 programme addresses the importance of personal responsibility on the part of all staff members in achieving the goals and objectives of the Organization. It will be rolled out in the second half of the year.

55. An essential element of the outreach, training and education mandate of the Ethics Office is the production and distribution of guidance materials on ethics. To strengthen global staff awareness of ethical obligations and associated standards of conduct, and noting its own capacity restraints, the Office has prioritized the development of accessible staff resource materials. During the reporting period, the Office arranged translation of its document entitled "Putting ethics to work: a guide for United Nations staff" into the six official languages. The guide provides direction to staff on the Organization's fundamental ethical values and standards that are applicable to their daily work, and is available on the Office webpages.

56. The Ethics Office document entitled "The road map: a staff member's guide to finding the right place" has additionally been updated and is being translated into the six official languages. As reported previously, the road map has received Organization-wide recognition for its value in informing staff of resources available to address their concerns. In assisting staff in identifying the relevant office for their specific issue immediately, the road map facilitates a more efficient use of staff and office time.

57. In hosting materials such as the leadership dialogue guides, the ethics guide and the road map, the Ethics Office webpage (www.un.org/en/ethics) continues to provide essential information on ethics, both to United Nations personnel and the

general public. During 2014/15, the webpage received approximately 74,000 individual visits. Also accessible on iSeek, the webpage contains comprehensive materials, links and other information relating to ethics at the United Nations.

E. Standard-setting and policy support

58. In the course of the reporting period, the Ethics Office provided significant assistance to various United Nations entities in developing policies and standards regarding staff conduct and integrity issues. Notably, the Office provided policy advice in the areas of financial disclosure, conflict of interest management and protection against retaliation. Through that support, the Office contributed to capacity-building on ethics and integrity within those entities.

59. The Ethics Office provided advice to field offices, peacekeeping missions and regional commissions regarding guidance to field staff on outside activities, the use of social media, ethics training and prevention and mitigation of conflicts of interest. Support activities included the provision of policy comments, proposed revisions to staff guidance notes and advice on vetting for conflicts of interest.

60. The Ethics Office further collaborated with other departments in the Secretariat in examining issues relating to personal and organizational conflicts of interest and provided policy advice regarding the terms and conditions of service for certain types of personnel.

IV. Ethics Panel of the United Nations

61. The Ethics Panel of the United Nations, established in December 2007 as the United Nations Ethics Committee and renamed in April 2013, is mandated to create a unified set of ethical standards and policies for the Secretariat and separately administered organs and programmes. It also consults on important and complex ethics matters having system-wide implications. The Panel is chaired by the Director of the Ethics Office.

62. The Ethics Panel is composed of the heads of the ethics offices of the funds and programmes and the Secretariat. Pursuant to Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2007/11, the Ethics Office provides ethics services to those separately administered organs and programmes that have not yet designated an ethics officer.

63. In the course of the reporting period, the Ethics Panel held 11 formal sessions. The Panel focused on establishing coherence and consistency in the application of ethics standards and reviewed lessons learned from the implementation of its core mandates. It also reviewed the annual reports prepared by member ethics offices.

64. During 2014/15, the Ethics Panel identified and deliberated on emerging ethical challenges posing individual, institutional and process risks. The Panel consulted on, inter alia, matters concerning reputational risk management, organizational and personal conflicts of interest, outside activities, the use of social media, the review of financial disclosure statements, intra-agency relationships, the parameters of confidentiality and internal justice system challenges. Such ongoing consultations contribute to the harmonized and consistent application of ethical standards across member organizations and entities.

65. Member ethics offices continued to develop and adapt core ethics training to the needs of their entities. They worked to diversify delivery methods in order to expand the benefits and impact of ethics training.

66. The Ethics Office and members of the Ethics Panel continued to participate in the activities of the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations. The Network was established in June 2010 in support of efforts by the Secretary-General to promote system-wide collaboration on ethics-related issues within the United Nations system. Serving as a broad forum of ethics functions from United Nations system entities, affiliated international organizations and international financial institutions, the Network provides support for professional development, benchmarking and the exchange of ethics policies and practices. Owing to the expanded participation of affiliated intergovernmental organizations and financial institutions having consultative and collaborative arrangements with the United Nations, the Network has contributed to a more extensive exchange of experiences and lessons learned in the delivery of ethics services in multilateral organizations. The seventh meeting of the Network, held in Washington, D.C., from 7 to 10 July 2015, was hosted by the Inter-American Development Bank.

67. Within the United Nations system, the Ethics Panel continues to serve an essential function as the sole mandated mechanism to promote the coherent application of ethical standards. In enhancing harmonized ethics and integrity policies and practices among member organizations, the Panel plays a vital role in fostering a United Nations identity based on integrity and accountability. By promoting an organizational culture of ethics and integrity within the international civil service, the Panel supports stronger and healthier institutions.

V. Observations and conclusions

68. Pursuant to its mandate to promote and consolidate a culture of ethics, transparency and accountability within the United Nations, the Ethics Office provides services to Secretariat staff across the Organization. Reflecting the importance of a strong ethics function, during the reporting period the Office received 980 requests for ethics services, the highest number received in its history. Highlights of the period include the Office responding to 533 confidential ethics advice requests; managing the 2014 cycle of the financial disclosure programme, which involved the review of 5,043 disclosure files; undertaking 148 outreach, training and education activities; responding to 40 inquiries concerning the Organization's protection against retaliation policy; administering the 2014 leadership dialogue initiative; and launching a new online ethics awareness training programme. The Office maintained its work to promote the coherent application and development of ethics standards, policies and initiatives among United Nations entities.

69. The efforts of the Ethics Office to engage with staff via enhanced outreach initiatives remain essential for preventing, mitigating, and managing ethical and reputational risk within the Organization. The Office's interaction with staff worldwide consistently demonstrates a strong staff demand for counselling, consultation and guidance on ethics and integrity issues. Given the importance of strengthening and consolidating an Organization-wide environment committed to

ethical conduct and institutional integrity, the Office remains committed to being as engaged as possible with all staff, regardless of location.

70. In the course of its work, the Ethics Office remains a leading advocate for the values and principles enshrined in the Charter. By engaging directly with staff and other stakeholders on those values and promoting adherence to the highest standards of efficiency, competency and integrity, the Office plays a distinctive and indispensable role within the Organization.

71. **The General Assembly is requested to take note of the present report.**

Annex

Financial disclosure programme compliance level, 2014

United Nations entity	*Required filers*	*Completed filings*	*Non-compliant(s)*
United Nations Secretariat			
Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions secretariat	2	2	–
Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate	4	4	–
Department for General Assembly and Conference Management	25	25	–
Department of Economic and Social Affairs	53	53	–
Department of Management	240	240	–
Department of Political Affairs, including special political missions	369	369	–
Department of Public Information	37	37	–
Department of Safety and Security	24	24	–
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	42	42	–
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	30	30	–
Economic Commission for Africa	111	111	–
Economic Commission for Europe	10	10	–
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	53	53	–
Ethics Office	13	13	–
Executive Office of the Secretary-General	15	15	–
International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda	19	19	–
International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals	16	16	–
International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia	34	34	–
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	27	27	–
Office of Administration of Justice	2	2	–
Office of Internal Oversight Services	16	16	–
Office of Legal Affairs	24	24	–
Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States	4	4	–
Office of the President of the General Assembly	2	2	–
Office of the Special Adviser on Africa	2	2	–
Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict	1	1	–
Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict	3	3	–
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	21	21	–
Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services	2	2	–

United Nations entity	*Required filers*	*Completed filings*	*Non-compliant(s)*
Peacebuilding Support Office	4	4	–
Regional Commissions New York Office	1	1	–
Special Court for Sierra Leone	1	1	–
Special Tribunal for Lebanon	30	30	–
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	26	26	–
United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund	73	73	–
United Nations Office at Geneva	82	82	–
United Nations Office at Nairobi	47	47	–
United Nations Office at Vienna	17	17	–
United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs	6	6	–
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	62	62	–
United Nations Office to the African Union	7	7	–
United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination	3	3	–
Subtotal (excluding peacekeeping operations)	**1 560**	**1 560**	**–**
Peacekeeping operations	1 628	1 628	–
United Nations bodies/agencies and others	1 855	1 855	–
Total	**5 043**	**5 043**	**–**